(8) The acceptance testing of any interface equipment^Connected to the DOT network will be carried out by the DOT.

(9) ISP may provide Internet service to any VSAT subscriber within the service area.

(10) Access to Internet through authorized cable operator permitted.

(11) Last mile linkages freely permitted within local area either by Fibre Optic or Radio Communication. Detailed terms and conditions governing the operations are part of Licence Agreement.

**Modernisation of Postal and telecom services in NER**

531. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the details of steps contemplated to expand and modernise postal and telephone services in the North-East Region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): *Postal*

(a) During the Annual Plan 1998-99, a target for opening 106 Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices, 6 Departmental Sub Post Offices has been fixed for the North East Region including Sikkim subject to availability of resources.

(b) During this Annual Plan, development programmes have also been chalked out for modernisation of Post Offices in the North East Region and Sikkim comprising the North East and Assam Postal Circles and the Sikkim State of West Bengal Postal Circle. Out of the following targets for all India implementation, 10% has been earmarked for the region:—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (i) | PC-based multi-purpose Counter Machines | 500 |
| (ii) | Installation of Savings Bank local area networks, | 100 |
| (iii) | Installation of Stamp cancellation machines, | 20 |
| (iv) | Supply of Electronic Franking Machines, (v) Hand Stamps Cancellors | 150 10000 |

Besides 10% of the above targets being allocated to the North East Region and Sikkim, there is also a proposal to install one VSAT Station at Ita Nagar for Satellite Money Transfers.

*Telecom:*

The details of steps contemplated by the Government for expansion and modernisation of Telecommunications services in North-East Region during the 9th Plan period (1997-2002) are given below.—

(A) 1. To Provide Telephone on demand by the year 2000.
2. To provide telephone facility in all the villages by 2002.
3. To provide STD facility to all the Exchanges.
4. To computerise trunk services in all the SSA Headquarters.
5. Use of optical Fibre technologies extensively in the network.
6. Introduction of better and reliable technologies for providig villages telephones.
7. To have reliable media for all exchanges.
8. Computerised billing and accounting in all the divisions.
9. To modernise fault repair service.
10. To computerise Directory enquiry services in all the SSAs.
11. To give priority for telecom facility in sensitive Bordcr areas.
Tribal and Hilly areas and Industrial Growth Centres.

(B) 1. Physical targets of various development parameters for 1998-99 in respect of North East Telecom Circle and Assam Telecom Circle arc given below:—

| S.No. | Item | Target 1998-99 NE | Assam | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Switching Capacity | 452000 | 68000 | 113200 |
| 2. | DELs | 32000 | 50000 | 82000 |
| 3. | Village Public Telephone (VPTs) | 1000 | 2900 | 3900 |
| 4. | Microwave UHF Systems (RKMs) | 330 | 831 | 1161 |
| 5. | Satellite Earth Stations | 15 | Nil | 15 |

**Recommendations of TRAI Regarding Telephone Charges**

532. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended hetty hike in telephone rental charges and local calls while proposing reduction in international calls;

(b) if so, the details of the recommendations made by TRAI alongwith justification, their impact and implications and other related matters as per working paper;

(c) the details of action taken/proposed to be taken thereon; and

(d) the details of estimated additional revenud likely to be collected by Govern ment as a result of the proposed hike with Stale-wise break-up in general and Maharashtra State in particular?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) The TRAI formed under the TRAI Act, 1997 has brought out a Consultation paper on Telecom Pricing suggesting inter-alia increase in rental and reduction in long distance tariff for rebalancing the tariff based on costs.

(b) to (d) The proposals of TRAI summarised at Annexure *[See* appendix 185, Annexure No. 13] arc at present being discussed by TRAI with Service providers, various Consumer Organisations and general public for their response, applications of these proposals

**Action Plan for Reliable and Efficient Postal Communication**

533. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA**:** Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the postal department has drawn up an action plan to become self sufficient and generate surplus resources through innovative schemes and create a reliable and efficient postal communication;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of the agenda of major problems discussed in the recent conference of Chief Post Masters and decision taken thereon;

(d) what is the action taken report on the recommendations of Talwar Committees; and

(c) the details of major achievements during the Eighth Plan period and major programme proposed during the current year and Ninth Plan, particularly for Maharashtra State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) and (b) For generating additional resources for the department some Premium products/Services like Speed Post, Business Post, Commercial Publicity and Express Post arc already in operation. Steps are being taken to further upgrade these services with a view to improving market share and providing better service to the customers. An Action Plan has also been drawn up to introduce in a phased planner some new products and services like, Greeting Post,